

ASCEND unites Dunia, Siemens Energy, BASF, HZB and FHI in €30M European catalyst initiative

Germany bets €30M on the next era of catalyst innovation, bringing together AI, automation, and industrial heavyweights to accelerate the energy transition.

BERLIN, GERMANY, March 30, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Germany's Federal Ministry for Research, Technology and Space (BMFTR) has committed €30 million to launch ASCEND, the next stage of Europe's catalyst innovation program. The initiative brings together [Dunia](#) Innovations, Siemens Energy, [BASF](#), Helmholtz-Zentrum Berlin ([HZB](#)), and the Fritz-Haber-Institut (FHI) of the Max Planck Society.

Catalysts are the invisible engines of modern life. They drive 90% of all chemical processes and underpin double digit trillions of euros in value-added products, from fuels and fertilizers to plastics, pharmaceuticals, and clean hydrogen. They also decide how much CO₂ gets emitted or avoided in the process.

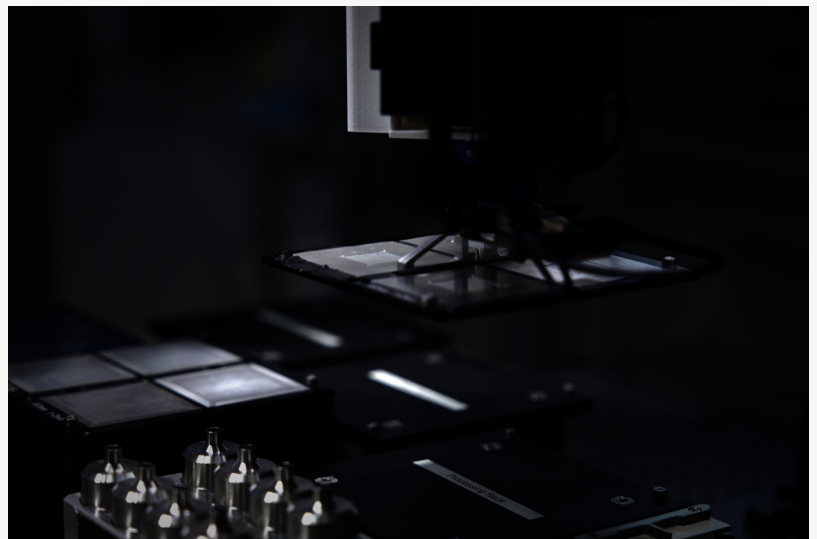
With ASCEND, Germany doubles down on its historic role as the cradle of modern catalysis and quantum science. Following more than €100 million invested in the first phase of ASCEND, this new funding powers a leap from fundamental discovery toward industrial deployment—linking Nobel Prize-winning science with global industry leaders.

Dunia's role

Dunia Innovations, based in Berlin, brings its AI-driven self-driving lab into the consortium. By combining automation, physics-informed AI, and industrially relevant synthesis, Dunia cuts



Dunia logo



Dunia

discovery timelines from decades to years. Its platform ensures that breakthroughs don't remain trapped in academic papers but scale into factories, accelerating the energy transition.

Industrial firepower

- ASCEND Phase I: Over €100M ecosystem with HZB, FHI, Max Planck CEC, BASF, TU Berlin, HU Berlin.

- €30M new funding: from BMFTR to accelerate breakthroughs into real-world deployment, with Siemens Energy now joining.

- Dunia's addition: An AI-native disruptor that turns Europe's science into industrial catalysts.

Alexander Hammer, CEO of Dunia Innovations said "Berlin gave the world quantum mechanics and modern catalysis. With ASCEND, it's doing it again, this time for the energy transition. Dunia is here to make sure discoveries move fast enough to matter.

"By bringing together frontier science, industrial leaders such as BASF and Siemens Energy, and emerging AI-native partners like Dunia, we are building a collaborative innovation platform with strong potential for global impact" says Karsten Reuter, project co-lead at FHI. "It fundamentally reshapes science's ability to deliver breakthrough solutions on industry timelines" Michelle Browne, co-lead at HZB adds."

About ASCEND

ASCEND is an EU innovation platform, launched in 2020 with more than €100 million in combined funding accelerating the transition of cities towards carbon neutrality. Led by HZB and FHI, with partners including BASF, Siemens Energy, TU Berlin, and HU Berlin, it develops tailor-made catalysts for hydrogen, CO₂ conversion, and other climate-critical processes. ASCEND adds €30M of fresh funding from BMFTR to accelerate discoveries toward industrial deployment.

About Dunia Innovations

Dunia Innovations is building the world's most advanced autonomous materials discovery platform. Based in Berlin, Dunia combines AI, robotics, and chemistry to invent catalysts and energy materials at the pace demanded by climate targets. Backed by Elaia, redalpine, EIC, Anglo American, Deep Science Ventures, and others, Dunia is pioneering the materials transition.

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